

The Story of Hanukkah

חנוכה

to continue their way of life. In 167 B.C., another empire, from what is now Syria, defeated Egypt and took control of Judea. The new king's name was Antiochus and he had no tolerance for the customs and religion of the Jewish people. He ordered that their temple be turned into an altar to Zeus, one of the Greek gods that he worshipped.

Led by a man named Judas Maccabee, the Jewish people revolted against the new empire and continued to practice their religion. After seven years of fighting, they reclaimed their temple and drove out the empire's army. Hanukkah celebrates the return of the temple to the Jewish people and the rededicating of it to Judaism after it had been turned into an altar to Zeus.

To be rededicated the temple had to be cleansed, and only olive oil that had not been used during the Greek rituals could be used for the lamps. It is said that there was only enough oil to burn for one day, and eight days were needed to make new oil. Many people of the Jewish faith believe that through a miracle, the day's supply of oil lasted the full eight days, allowing the temple to be rededicated. This The eight days of Hanukkah represent the eight days the oil lasted.

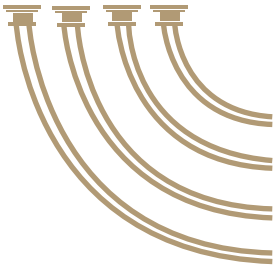
The story of Hanukkah is an important story in the history of the Jewish people. Around 600 B.C., the Jewish people had been driven out of their land, called Judea (now part of Israel), and exiled to a land called Babylon (now part of Iraq). After 70 years in Babylon, the Babylonian king, Cyrus the Great, allowed the Jewish people to return to their land and continue practicing their religion, called Judaism. When they returned, they built a new temple where their old one had been. For hundreds of years they lived there and worshipped at the temple.

Over the years Judea had been conquered by Alexander the Great and became a part of the kingdom of Egypt. The Jewish people, however, were allowed

 *Rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem*



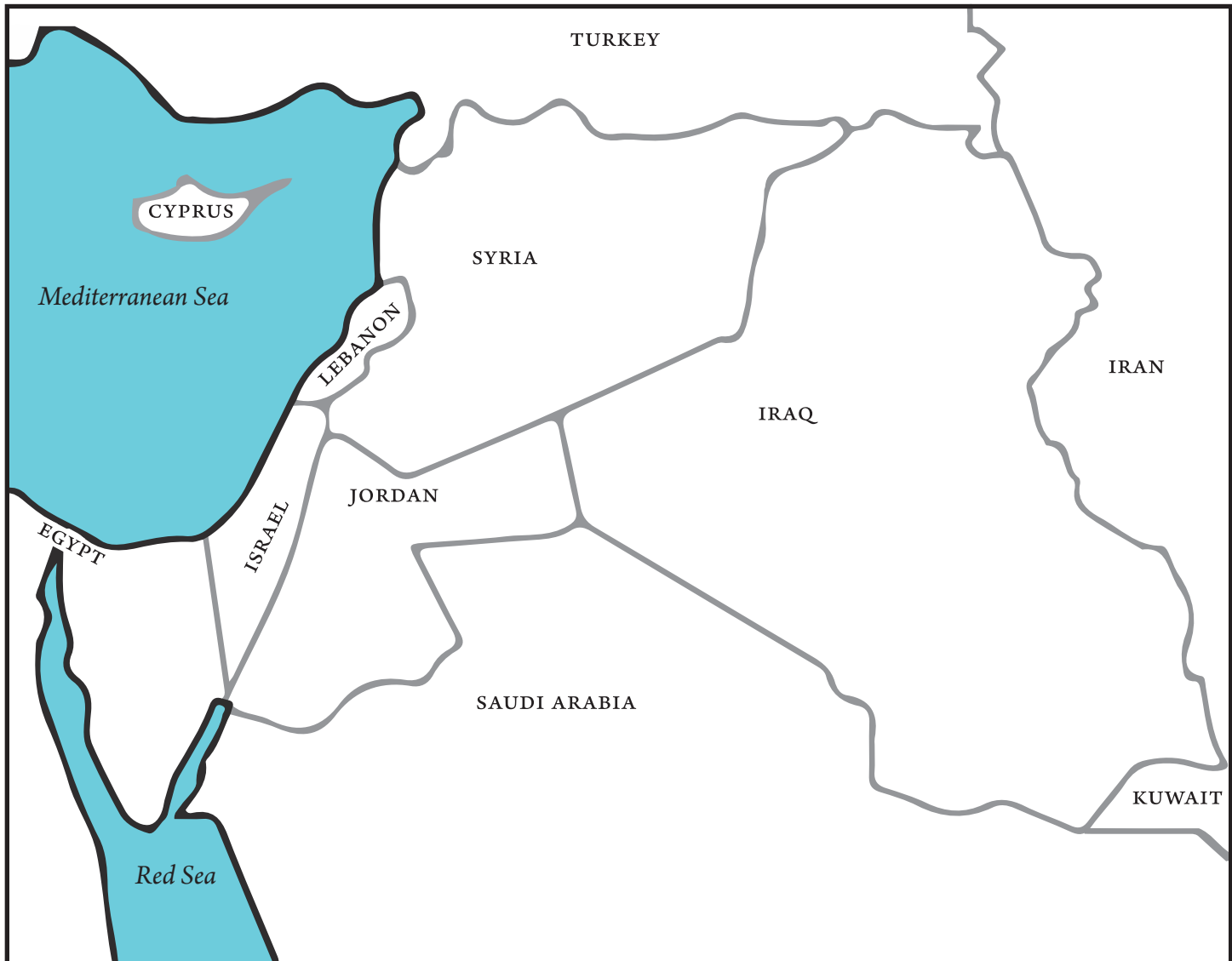
MAP ACTIVITY



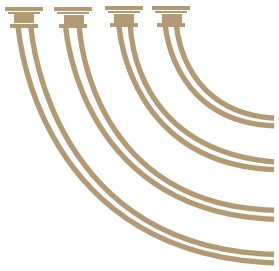
This is a modern map of a small part of the Middle East where most of the history of Judea and the Jewish people happened. The area shown on the map is about a quarter the size of the United States. What do you think it was like for so many different cultures and empires to be so close to one another?



Color in the countries where the old empires from the story of Hanukkah used to be.



MA'OZ TZUR



The Ma'oz Tzur is a traditional song that is sung and spoken during Hanukkah. It recites the ancient history of the Jewish people and Judaism. There are six stanzas to the song but only two are shown here. On the left is how the song is written in its original language, Hebrew (the Hebrew alphabet reads right to left). The English translation is on the right side. Read these two stanzas, think about how they apply to what you've learned about the story of Hanukkah, and answer the questions below.



דביר קדשו הביאני, וגם שם לא שקטתי
ובא נוגש וְהַגְלֵנִי, כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי
וַיֵּין רַעַל מִסִּכְתִּי, כַּמַּעֲט שְׁעַבְרָתִי
הָיָה בָּבֶל זְרַבְבֶּל, לְקֶחַץ שְׂבָעִים נוֹשְׁעָתִי.

He brought me to His holy abode; Even there, I found no rest.
The oppressor came and exiled me, Because I served strange gods,
and drank poisonous wine. Yet scarcely had I gone into exile,
When Babylon fell and Zerubbabel took charge; Within seventy years
I was saved.

יוֹנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי, אֲזֵי יְמֵי חֲשֹׁמִינִים
וּפָרְצוּ חֻמוֹת מִגְדָּלִי, וְטָמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים
וּמִנּוֹתָר קִנְקֵנִים נַעֲשָׂה נֶס לְשׁוֹשְׁנִים
בְּנֵי בִינָה יָמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וְרִנָּנִים

The Greeks gathered against me, in days of the Hasmoneans.
They broke down the walls of my towers, and defiled all the oils.
But from the last remaining flask a miracle was wrought for the Jews.
Therefore the sages of the day ordained these eight for songs of praise.

When the song mentions being exiled, where were the Jewish people exiled to?

Who do you think is meant by “the Greeks” when the song says “The Greeks gathered against me”?

What lines tell the story of the miracle of the oil?
